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ABSTRACT

A study of whole language teaching in urban heterogeneous classrooms was undertaken to identify teacher student classroom discourse patterns. Using the Gutierrez Index of Coding Schema researchers identified three discourse scripts in the 14 bilingual and multicultural classrooms in Southern California under investigation. These were: the recitation script, the responsive script, and the responsive-collaborative script. Results of the study indicated that most teachers favored the responsive script when providing whole language instruction. There were educationally significant differences between experienced and novice teachers on selected variables of the scale. There were insignificant correlational results on the type of discourse pattern teachers used and the standardized California Achievement Tests language subsection. (Three tables of data are included; 43 references, the coding schema, and 9 graphs of data are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Approaches to Teaching Language Arts in a Bilingual Multicultural Setting

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ABSTRACT

A study of whole language teaching in urban heterogeneous classrooms was undertaken to identify teacher student classroom discourse patterns. Using the Gutierrez Index of Coding Schema researchers identified three discourse scripts in the bilingual and multicultural classrooms under investigation (N=14). These were; the recitation script, the responsive script, and the responsive - collaborative script.

Results of the study indicate that most teachers favor the responsive script when providing whole language instruction. There were educationally significant differences between experienced and novice teachers on selected variables of the scale. There were insignificant correlational results on type of discourse pattern teachers used and the standardized CAT-E language subsection.

INTRODUCTION

Issues of school learning environments and the learning experiences of children from various cultures become complex when we study psychocultural variables affecting learning in heterogeneous student populations. In an effort to uncover aspects of cultural compatibilities affecting instruction in culturally heterogeneous classrooms the following research project was conducted. A general question, how can cultural compatible instruction be implemented when teachers have two or more cultural and language groups in the classroom was addressed in this preliminary research.through analysis of discourse patterns in bilingual and bicultural classrooms.

Most research on culturally compatible instruction focus on culturally homogeneous classrooms. We would like to extend the scope of this research to include heterogeneous classrooms - classrooms having bilingual and multicultural student populations. We selected discourse patterns as a specific effect to study since the instructional language of

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the classroom, i.e. teacher-student dialogue has a significant effect on learning, especially for the student of color in our public schools.

Three teaching strategies are identified in the study through teacher obtained scores on the Gutierrez Index of Coding Schema (appendix) and sample transcriptions of dialogue between teachers and students. The three strategies identify scripts of dialogue during instruction. They are: the Recitative style (teacher dominated classroom discourse), the Responsive style (teacher and student are co-producers of instructional dialogue) and the Responsive / Collaborative style (teacher facilitates instruction by responding and collaborating to assist learning).

Dialogues occurring during whole language instruction were recorded. Study teachers received professional development instruction in whole language as part of the district wide academic year focus for student achievement. Researchers felt that whole language activities encourage language development through discourse. In whole language instruction conceptual learning is facilitated by integrating oral and written language. In whole language instruction teachers have more freedom than that found in basal instruction, to select topical materials for possible for cultural congruency. When you want to develop concept formation you access student's prior knowledge (cultural as well as academic) to facilitate learning (Vygotsky, 1962). Basing new schemes of learning on already existing schemes follows a preferred strategy for whole language instruction (Goodman, 1988). Therefore we selected language arts instructional time because it would offer us an opportunity to access and assess the quality of discourse occurring between teachers and students in classroom discussions.

The research presented herein, identifies and describes discourse patterns occurring in fourteen classrooms that are approximately 60% Latino and 40% African-American each. The classrooms are in southern California on the outskirts of the city of Los Angeles. Of the six hundred and eighty five students enrolled in the school, 456 (66%) of these are limited English proficient. Students in grades one through five scored below the national norm group in reading, language, and mathematics for the last three years on the CAT-E test.

The district has 33,000 students in 24 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, and 3 high schools. The twenty-four elementary schools and one middle school are Chapter 1 schoolwide project schools. The student population is 54.58% Latino, 43.57% African-American, 1.54% other (primarily Pacific Islanders) and 0.31% White. Between 70 - 75% of students in the district have been identified as academic low achievers. Fifty per cent of these students are limited English proficient.

Teachers entering classrooms in this school are confronted with exceptional instructional and management issues. Results of this study may help teachers in developing appropriate instructional strategies that could relieve some instructional concerns found in our nation's bilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Statement of Problem

The problem of raising the academic achievement of students in many of our urban areas is exacerbated by the increasing numbers of diverse student populations found in these schools. Research on the academic achievement of urban school students has shown that low academic achievement is frequent and not easily remedied. Insight into potential solutions to low achievement has been found in cultural compatible instruction studies. While holding promise for increasing the academic achievement of urban school students these studies generally focus on homogeneous class configurations. Several questions become evident in the attempt to translate research findings from the homogeneous studies to the classroom having a multicultural and bilingual composition.

How does the teacher plan and deliver instruction to assist the learning performance of these students? What instructional strategies are implemented to approach these differing learning styles? How does the teacher economize instructional time?

In an attempt to begin to answer these questions we investigated teacher student discourse during language arts instruction in heterogeneous urban classrooms. We assumed that teachers were familiar with this type of population and that they may possess instructional strategies that facilitated instruction. If these assumptions were accurate then the study would provide descriptive evidence of instructional strategies that facilitate student learning. Yet, test scores indicated that student academic achievement was not where teachers wished them to be. While assuming teachers had a sense of the appropriate strategy to use in their heterogeneous classroom there was still a concern on their part for ways to improve that instruction . The problem then, for this aspect of the much larger research is what instructional style aids instruction for teachers and what instructional style has a concomitant benefit for students?

Experienced teachers are instructing with a style that for them has proven "effective." Effectiveness for them may be measured by variables such as student participation and classroom control. Test scores may not be the single most important measure of instructional success for teachers of this population.

The researchers, recognizing the multitude of issues surrounding instruction focussed their preliminary research on uncovering the type of discourse occurring in

heterogeneous classrooms. Results from this study will be beneficial in determining identifiable and measurable instructional strategies that generate a variety of positive academic and social effects for children attending school in culturally heterogeneous classrooms.

Literature Review

Classroom Instruction

Ethnically homogeneous classes generate much of the research on effective classroom instruction for minority students (Sthal and Miller, 1989; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). Tharp (1988) suggests improving educational opportunities for underachieving minority students by more study of the following psychocultural variables; social organization, sociolinguistics, cognition, and motivation. He feels that these four variables are essential for considering cultural compatible instruction in schools and classrooms with culturally diverse students. Tharp believes that by studying these variables, educators gain insight into social structures: the courtesies and conventions of the language, patterns of cognition, and specific motivational elements that are effective for facilitating student learning.

Teacher and student classroom discourse patterns interact with psychocultural variables in a way has the potential of positively influencing instruction. Psychocultural variables form a general way of perceiving the impact of culture in the class. Discourse patterns provide specific access into classroom instruction.

According to Vygotsky (1978), higher order intellectual functions develop out of social interaction. Therefore, a child's intellectual development cannot be understood simply by a study of the individual, but, must incorporate the external social world in which the individual is developing. The external social world is the setting in which the individual operates and interacts with others in social discourse. Because personal interactions help form individual intellectual processes, it is important to incorporate prior experiences when planning for instruction. Because schools are charged with the responsibility to facilitate children's intellectual functions, Vygotsky's point of view may help us in reevaluating how we view, plan and select materials for instruction in the classroom.

Teaching bilingual bicultural students requires an understanding of cognitive development within the child's sociocultural experiences. Language becomes the means of elaborating these experiences and follows from Vygotsky's (1962) premise that language is socially constructed and mediated. Therefore, adaptation of educational methods to

incorporate students' everyday experiences will facilitate the learning of new school concepts. A teacher's awareness of the importance of incorporating students' everyday experiences when introducing school concepts, will facilitate the learning process.

Classroom Discourse

In research concerning teacher - student classroom interactions including student-teacher dialogues, (Cazden, 1988; Mahlios, 1980) noted the cognitive dissonance that arises in classrooms where the amount of student-teacher dialogue is limited by sociolinguistic interference. Cazden points out that much of the research on discourse dissonance identifies majority culture student populations, the research domain of the "status quo." She cites project KEEP in Hawaii and research in Appalachia (Heath, 1982) as examples showing the instructional value of having teachers do lesson planning activity after being informed by student linguistic patterns.

Cook-Gumperez and Gumperez (1982) suggested that systematic differences concerning school related experiences exist between majority and minority cultures. Their analysis of linguistic competence points to a demonstration of how teacher and student "cultural presuppositions interact with other kinds of knowledge and processing strategies...." They feel that teachers should develop awareness of "interactive" uses of language in modern urban settings.

The research intends to extend the work of linguists who recognize the uniqueness of cultural verbal expressions. Their work favors negotiation over confrontation and facilitates constructive dialogue among teachers and students with possible results being an increase in students' academic achievement.

Cognitive Psychology

Research on the application of cognitive psychological theory applied to instructional activities supports a claim that good teaching practices may supersede social class distinctions. The application of cognitive psychological theory to educational practice has been heralded as an important watershed in educational research (Beck and Carpenter, 1986; Brophy, 1986; Calfee, 1987). The teacher - student cognitive styles studies, evident since 1969, exemplified in the Aptitude - Interaction - Treatment (ATI) model of Cronbach and Snow, and the cognitive skills involved in teaching research (Shavelson and Stern, 1981) illustrate the usefulness of cognitive theory in aiding educational practice.

In the late seventies, educational research began to appear that analyzed instructional actions of teachers from a cognitive perspective. The findings have been interpreted to suggest that teacher perceptions toward instruction and their rationale for delivery of subject

matter are significant variables to examine when addressing student achievement (Duffy, 1982; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Borko, Shavelson and Stern, 1981). Previous models of teacher student interaction did not consider the interactive effects of teacher decision making and judgments occurring between teacher and student during instruction (Stern and Shavelson, 1983). The enervating characteristics of this type of research spawned a search for methods of capturing more of classroom life (Shavelson, 1982). This need led to the embracing of cognitive research to assist in the conceptualization of the importance and relevance of teacher cognition during the teaching act (Beck & Carpenter, 1986).

Calfee (1981) and others have suggested that the revolution in cognitive psychology be exploited for significant use by educational practitioners. Beck and Carpenter (1986) note that analysis of reading skill has improved over the last decade because of our awareness of cognition and cognitive models applied to learning processes. This allegiance to cognitive psychological principals of problem formulation and analysis aided Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) and Leinhardt and Smith (1985) in developing analyses of two very important teacher activities: lesson planning and presentation, and subject matter knowledge.

Peterson and others (Peterson, 1978 et al; Morine-Dershimer, 1978 -79) examined teacher planning activities to address the question of how teachers plan and how that planning effects student achievement and attitude. One conclusion of this effort was that teachers' cognitive processing styles and abilities affected the quality of their lesson planning. A formal model of analysis of these cognitive processing attributes of teachers was presented several years later by Leinhardt and Greeno (1984, 1986).

The idea that teachers become skilled in a particular cognitive teaching attitûde is not unusual. Saracho and Dayton (1980), Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) claim that skilled teaching performance have schemata at differing levels of generality. They applied a model developed by Sacerdoti (1977) to the analysis of cognitive skills involved in teaching. Analysis of the cognitive skills of teaching requires a personalized "cognitive" account of teaching schemas that are informed by actual classroom experience. Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) have expanded the notion of cognitive styles from either field dependent or field independent to include a much more comprehensive definition of expert teaching.

Expert teachers perform a set of activities that they may implement during instruction (Leinhardt and Greeno, 1986; Brophy, 1986). These activity structures are not meant to be exhaustive of teacher behaviors accomplished during instruction (Green, 1974). They are, however, frequently occurring acts that are found in the repertoire of expert teachers.

The research model has shown promise for conceptualizing teacher student classroom discourse. If teachers are aware of the types of discourse that facilitate instruction then their lessons might reflect such insight. However few of the recent cognitive insights have been applied to the activities of teachers in classrooms with culturally heterogeneous students. The avenues for change intimated in research on cognitive psychology lend credence to the hypothesis that knowledge of the teacher's meta - cognition concerning his/her minority student population may help in interdicting a cycle of school failure.

METHODS for CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Subjects

Fourteen teachers and their students were observed during language arts instruction approximately six times each during a four week period (84 total obs. avg 45 min.each). Twelve teachers in the study are African - American (86%), two are European - American (14%). One teacher is fluent in Spanish but had not taken the required examination for bilingual certification when the study occurred. Another teacher is enrolled in the Bilingual Masters degree program at the university and had not completed all requirements to be certified capable of teaching in a bilingual classroom at the time of the study. The district has a shortage of bilingual teachers and the situation at the research site is very common.

Seven instructors (Lead Teachers) had an average teaching tenure of 20 years at the time of the study. These lead teachers were identified as having superior teaching skills by a committee consisting of school and university faculty and staff, as well as parents. They applied to teach at this site that is in a collaborative teacher training arrangement with the university. Seven other teachers (Interns) had between one and two years classroom experience at the time of the study. Intern teachers are pursuing their preliminary credential at the university while simultaneously teaching full time under alternative certification (emergency credential). The university provides inservice professional development training for both intern and lead teachers at the school site. Each intern teacher is paired with a lead teacher. The latter are to help the former in all aspects of teaching. Lead and Intern teachers are individuals committed to working in an urban inner city school.

Students in the study (N=408) were 63% Hispanic (N= 256), 37% African-American (N=151) and (.02%) European American (N=1). Students studied represented two Kindergartens, 2 First , 2 Second, 4 Third, 2 Fourth, and 2 Fifth grades.

The Study

The purpose of the study was to find discourse patterns of Lead and Intern teachers during whole language instruction in heterogeneous classes.

Four research assistants trained in the use of the Gutierrez Index of Coding Schema (appendix) gathered the data. Their training consisted of learning the Index and then viewing video tapes of classroom instruction while simultaneously coding teacher-student interactions. Inter-rater reliability was established. Research assistants began data collection after attaining facility and accuracy in coding teacher-student responses on the Gutierrez Index of Coding Schema.

Before the observations, study teachers participated in a conference on Whole Language Instructional Strategies. This workshop provided teachers with instructional strategies using Whole Language techniques that would adapted for observation. This instruction was supplemented by three outside reading specialists who delivered inservice professional development activities at the school site on whole language teaching for approximately two hours each.

Instrument - Index of Coding Schema

Each of the nine variables on the coding instrument can range from one to five points giving a total score of 45 points for the scale (Gutierrez, 1991). Total variable points are then compared with teaching scripts that show classroom discourse patterns. These are Recitation style of teaching 0-18 points; Responsive teaching 23 - 29 and; Responsive /Collaborative teaching 30 and above (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988).

The recitation script is a strict form of discourse between teacher and students in which the teacher has control of the dialogue by asking questions with predictable, correct answers. Mehan (1979) identified the IRE pattern, initiation-response-evaluation as most frequently occurring in this script.

Responsive teaching when compared with recitation is a more flexible discourse between teachers and students. The teacher allows for some digression while maintaining a focus on lesson objectives

Responsive / collaborative teaching scripts encourage students to talk and participate in co-equal discourse with the teacher.

Areas outside the range between recitation and responsive teaching act as a buffer zone that hinges on the lesson objective. For example, a teacher may want the class to listen to a series of directions that do not require student participation.

These observed data were supplemented by videotapes of three classrooms. Transcriptions of these videotapes were recorded and analyzed.

Findings

From the observations (N=1683) we were able to identify scripts present in each classroom. (Table 1). Four teachers implemented a strict recitation script, eight used a responsive script and two implemented a responsive/collaborative script during whole language instruction.Lead and Intern teachers differed in their script preference (Tables 2 &3).

Observed Teaching Scripts

GRADE	Recitation	Responsive	Responsive Collab.
K		1	1
1	2		
2	1	1	
3	1	3	
4		1	1
5		2	
Total	4	8	2

TABLE 1

Lead Teacher Script Preference

GRADE	Recitation	Responsive	Responsive Collab.
K		1	
1	1		
2	1		
3		2	
4		1	
5		1	
Total	2	5	

TABLE 2

Intern Script Preferences

GRADE	Recitation	Responsive	Responsive Collab.
K			1
1	1		
2		1	
3	1	1	
4			1
5		1	
Total	2	3	2

TABLE 3

Discussion

Conclusions

The most frequently occurring approach to whole language instruction for lead and intern teachers and their students was the responsive script. The researchers believe that literature on whole language instruction necessarily involves more teacher-student dialogue than that found in our research setting in the responsive scripts. This literature gives a rationale for the responsive / collaborative style of teaching as allowing for academically meaningful discourse. Such teacher student interactions, whole language researchers and others believe are vital to the development of children's higher order thinking skills.

Teachers at this site may choose the responsive script based on their experiences and the recent training in whole language instruction. Without the training there may have been more recitative dialogues.

We were interested in approaches to whole language instruction used when teaching heterogeneous students along with the scripts used during this instruction. It may, given the previous training and psychocultural awareness of student learning styles that these teachers preferred this script.

Although an inverse relationship was found between reading comprehension and teaching scripts this relationship was weak ($r = -.03$). Does a particular script facilitate instruction that leads to academic improvement in culturally heterogeneous classrooms? More research on relationships other than reading comprehension should lead to more

understanding of the "appropriate" script to implement in a culturally heterogeneous classroom. This research may lead us into an investigation of how students learn at home providing clues to distinct strategies for classroom instruction.

Lead and Intern Teacher Differences

While findings showed the preponderance of the responsive script in teaching. Intern and Lead teacher differences on some variables on the coding schema generated findings worthy of discussion (appendix). On variables that elicit strong student - teacher cooperative discourse intern teachers were more likely than lead teachers to promote this type of dialogue. This finding may indicate the influence of recent training instruction for new teachers and their willingness to implement the new knowledge.

However on the "Expansion Options" variable lead teachers incorporated more of the childrens' responses into their lessons than did the intern teachers. This suggests the experienced teachers have skills that enabled them to incorporate student responses into a lesson. Such activity facilitates language discourse as it "validates" student responses. All teachers scored high on the "Extent of Participation " variable. This may suggest that in this heterogeneous setting teachers feel the importance of involving students in the lesson. Lead teachers' ability to incorporate more of the student input into the lesson may be a result of their teaching experience moreso than their reliance on a responsive / collaborative script for teaching.

Recommendations

We have found through a preliminary analysis of teaching scripts that students in a responsive / collaborative classroom have more of an opportunity for discourse when compared to children with teachers operating from the other two scripts. This responsive / collaborative discourse pattern allows for more student development of concept formation than the others (Vygotsky, 1978).

If the scripts tend to congregate in the responsive area this may be a result of the training in whole language that the two groups received. This curriculum allows for flexibility of instruction within the context of classroom discourse. Further awareness of pedagogy for minority students in the area of cultural compatibilities based on a more thorough analysis of student teacher discourse patterns, psychocultural variables, and home learning patterns may be an additional guide for teachers in assisting the performance of their students.

As our research continues we plan to develop with teachers in the study, concrete approaches to teaching students in heterogeneous classrooms that are based on our findings

as well as teacher experiences working with these students. One outcome to the research was a booklet of whole language instructional strategies based on lessons taught during the observations.

Continued analysis of teaching scripts with concurrent analysis of the bilingual bicultural children in these classroom is recommended for further research. This strategy permits research on psychocultural variables in bilingual bicultural classrooms. Data from these activities can positively impact teacher training as well as student achievement.

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APPENDIX

Code Sheet

Tape #: _____ Activity Set _____ of _____ Total Score _____

Approx. Length (in minutes) _____ Activity Topic: _____

Date: _____ Teacher: _____ Coder: _____

1.) Indicate Language Used For This Activity: a.) English b.) Spanish c.) Both

2.) Physical Configuration

Orientation: 1 2 3 4

3.) Number of Participants _____

Instructional Configuration/Focus of Observation and Analysis

4.) a.) Small Group ___
b.) Whole Class ___
c.) Individualized Work ___
d.) Other ___

5.) a.) T Assigned ___
b.) S Selected ___

6.) Nature of Participation

Teacher Led ___ Student Led ____

Discourse Pattern

7.) Speaker Designation
(T Designates/No Designation)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

8.) Teacher Response
(Non-acceptance/Incorporation)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

9.) Generating Topics
(T Selected/Co-construction)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

10.) Sequence Organization
(Strict IRE/Chained Utterances)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

11.) Preference Organization
(Correctness/Shared Knowledge)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

12.) Occurence of Repairs
(No Repairs/Teacher-Student Managed)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

Gutierrez & Estrada, 1991

13.) Repair Initiation
(Teacher vs Teacher/Student Initiations)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

14.) Expansion Options
(No Expansions/Incorporations)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

15.) Extent of Participation
(Small Core/Whole Class)

1 2 3 4 5 NA

9_____

Task Definition: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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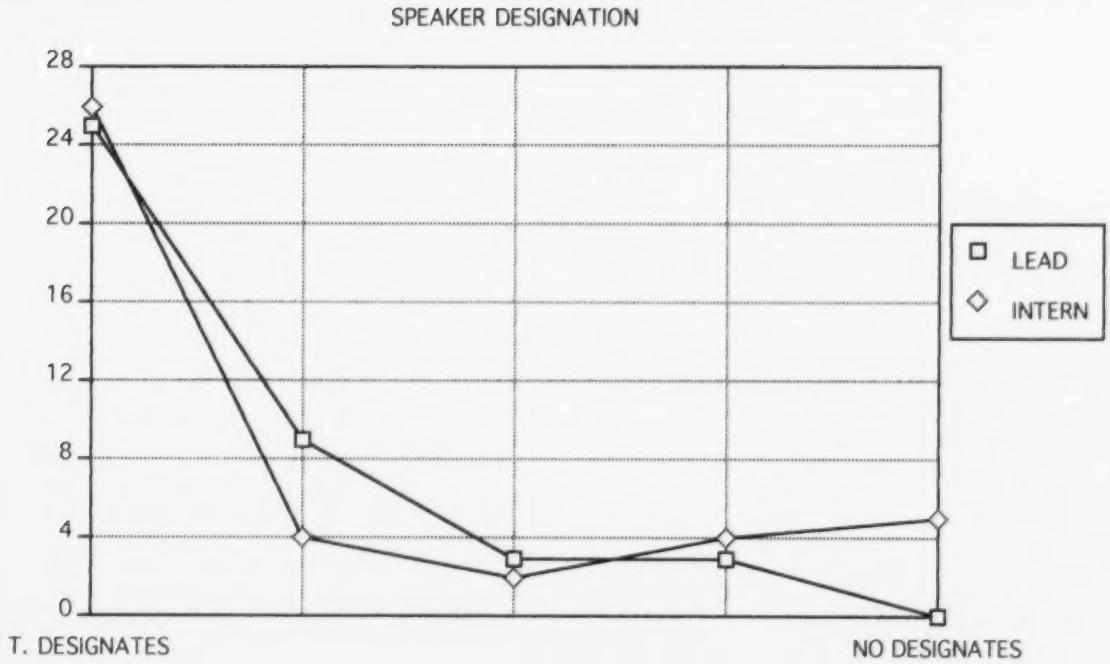
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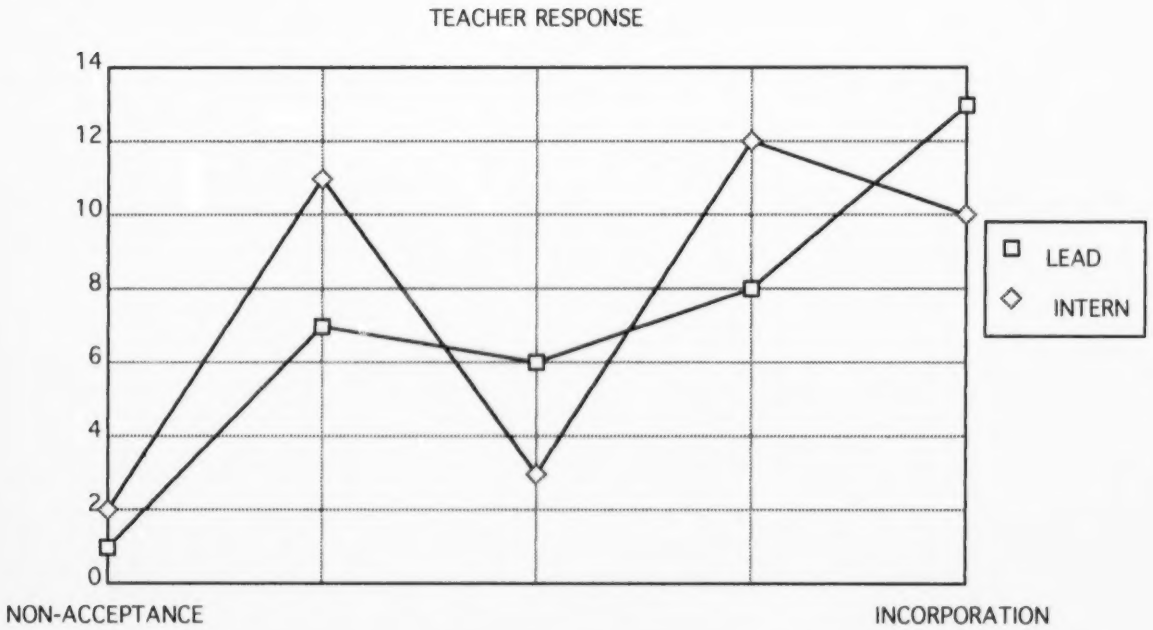
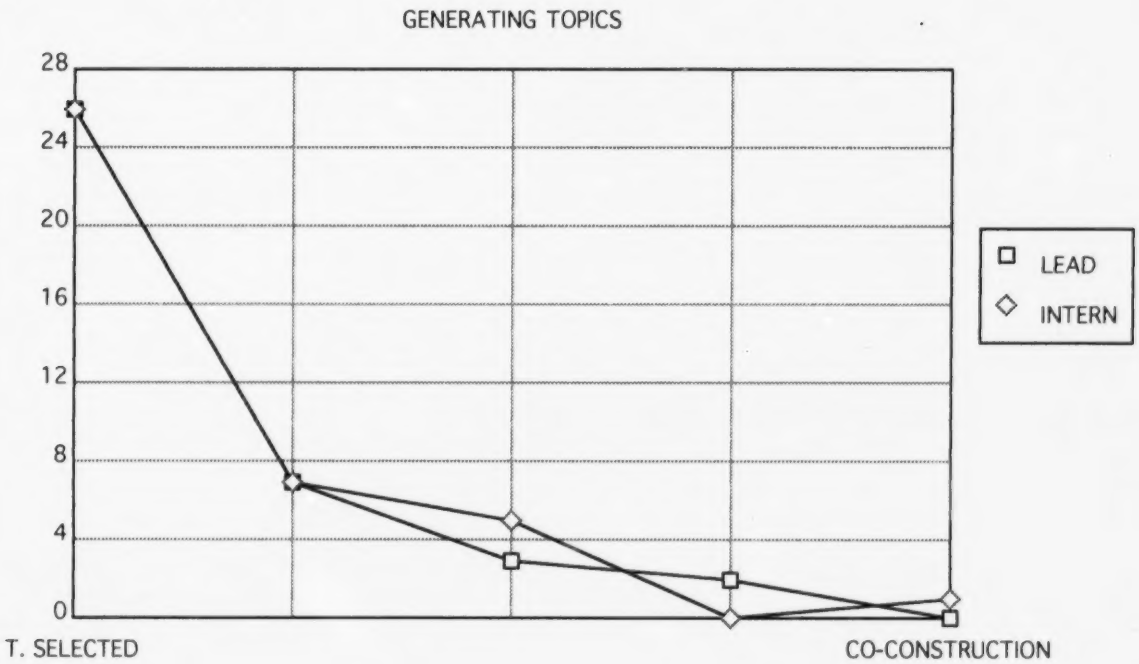
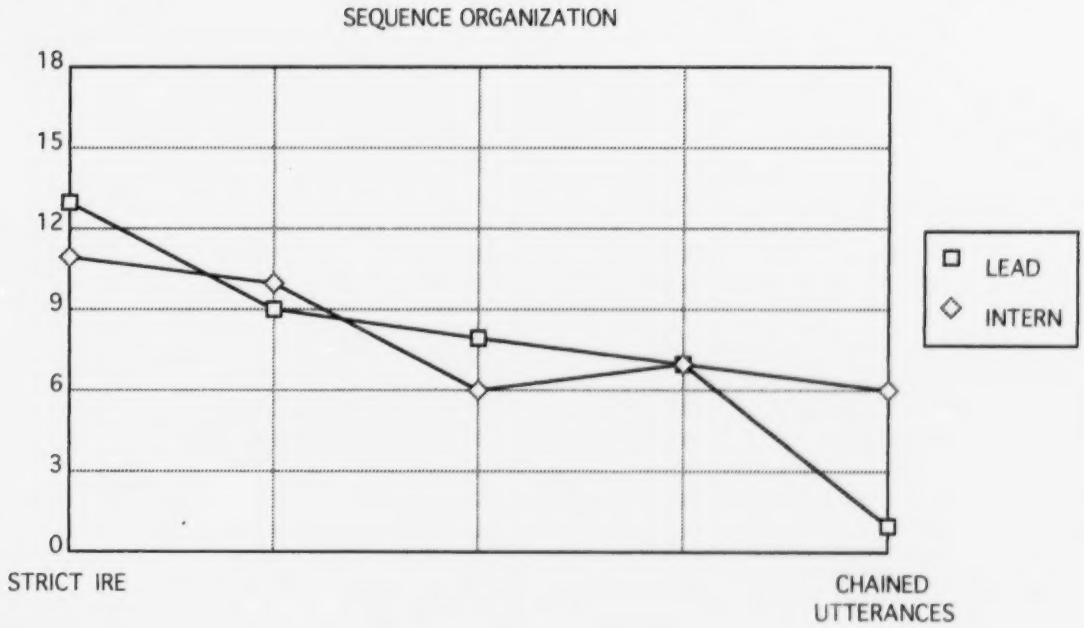
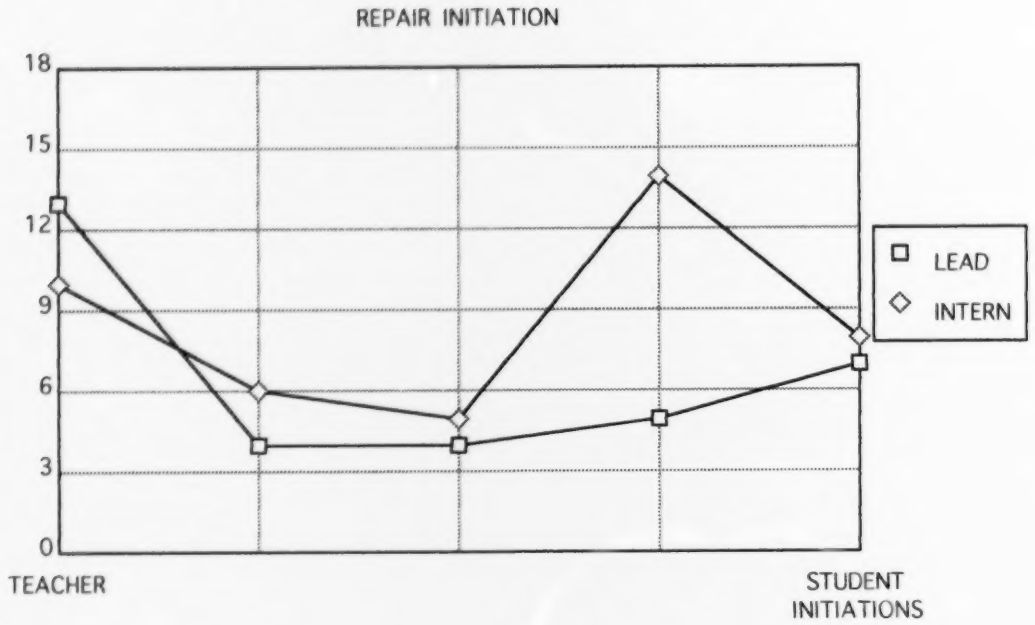
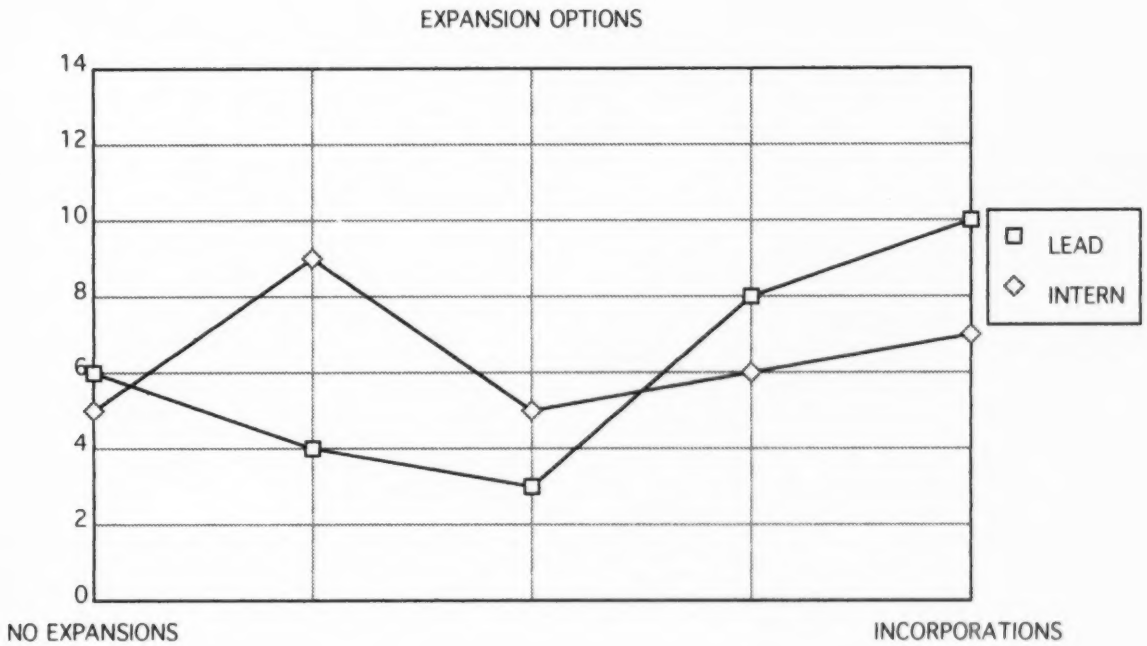
28
24
20
16
12
8
4
0
LEAD
INTERN
T. DESIGNATES
NO DESIGNATES


TEACHER RESPONSE
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
LEAD
INTERN
NON-ACCEPTANCE
INCORPORATION

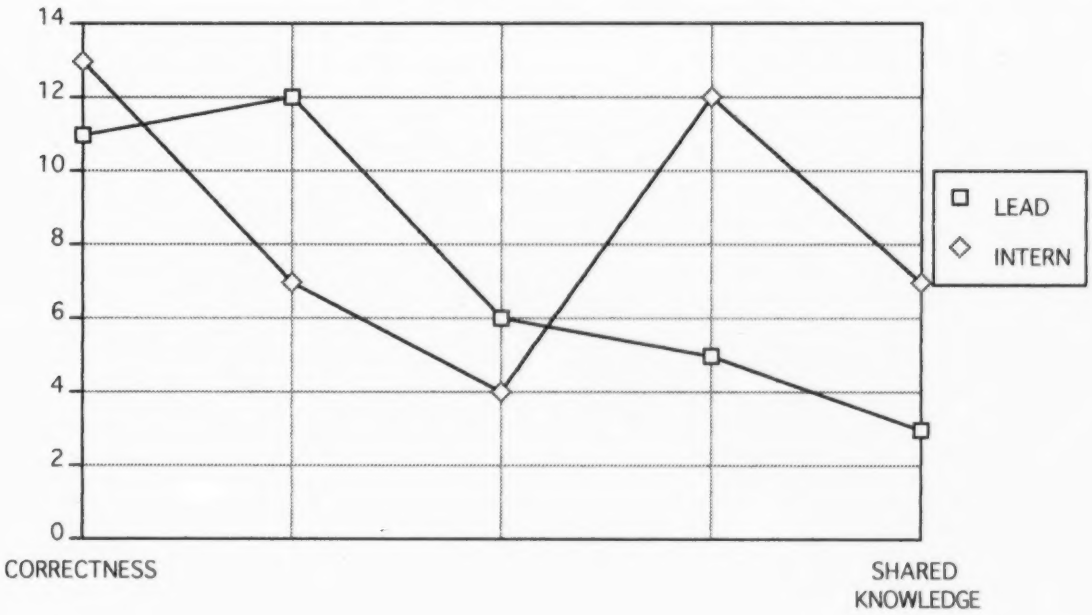

GENERATING TOPICS
28
24
20
16
12
8
4
0
LEAD
INTERN
T. SELECTED
CO-CONSTRUCTION

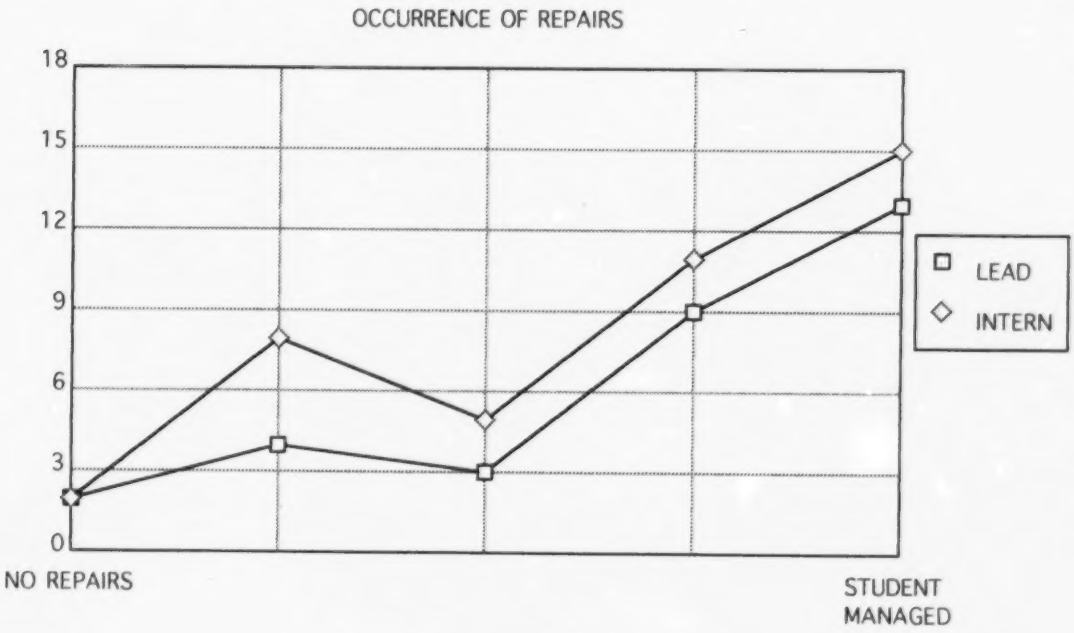

SEQUENCE ORGANIZATION
18
15
12
9
6
3
0
LEAD
INTERN
STRICT IRE
CHAINED
UTTERANCES

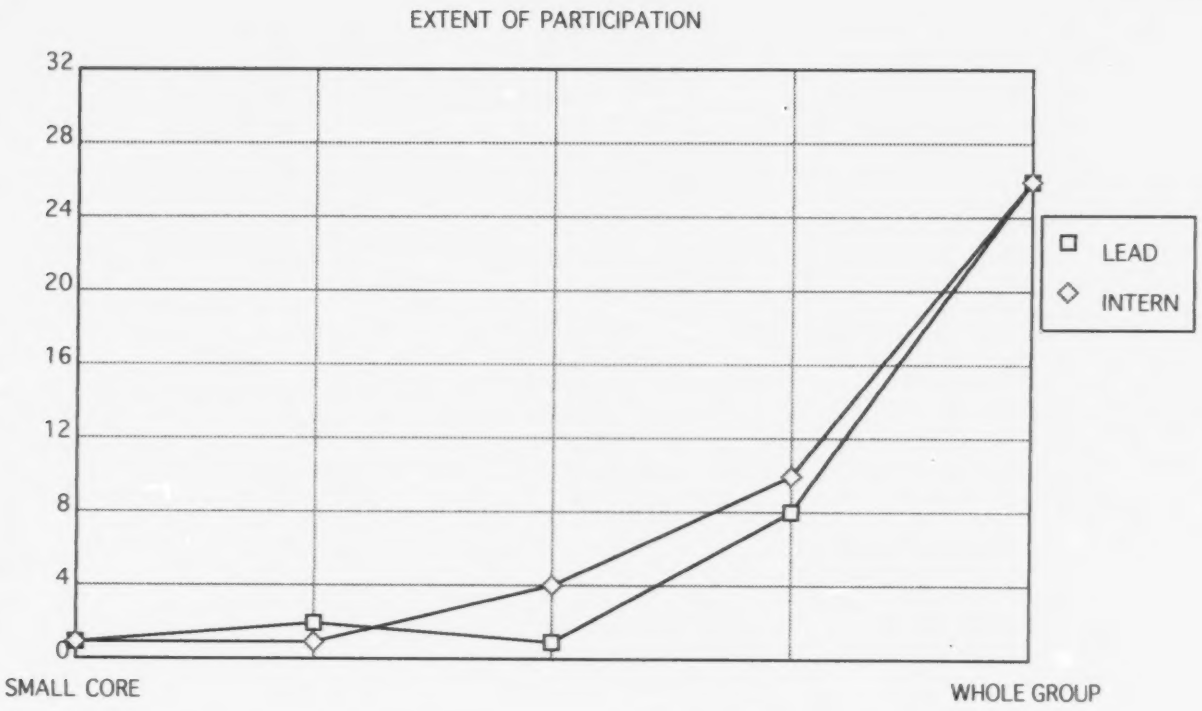

REPAIR INITIATION
18
15
12
9
6
3
0
LEAD
INTERN
TEACHER
STUDENT
INITIATIONS


EXPANSION OPTIONS
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
LEAD
INTERN
NO EXPANSIONS
INCORPORATIONS

PREFERENCE ORGANIZATION




OCCURRENCE OF REPAIRS
18
15
12
9
6
3
0
LEAD
INTERN
NO REPAIRS
STUDENT
MANAGED


EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION
32
28
24
20
16
12
8
4
0
LEAD
INTERN
SMALL CORE
WHOLE GROUP